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Commission on the Status of Women
Forty-fifth session
6-16 March 2001
Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Thematic issues: gender and all forms of discrimination, in particular, racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

Statement submitted by Zonta International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* * *

* E/CN.6/2001/1.

01-24077 (E) 140201

Zonta International, an organization of executive professionals whose objectives are to improve the legal, political, economic, educational, health, and professional status of women, is working to end discrimination against women and girls and promote gender equality and the actualization of human rights of women.

Zonta International has focused particular attention on the issue of violence against women, which is one of the many faces of discrimination against women and which affects women's exercise of their human rights in every phase of their lives. Beginning in 1995, when the Zonta International Summit on Violence against Women increased member and media awareness of the many forms which gender-based violence takes, Zonta International has expanded its commitment to the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls. During the past three years, through its international project with the United States Fund for UNICEF, Zonta has supported efforts to dramatically reduce the practice of female genital circumcision in Burkina Faso. Another Zonta International project with UNIFEM is working to combat gender-based violence in India by training police personnel in "legal literacy" regarding gender issues and violence, by sponsoring a media campaign to heighten public awareness about violence against women and by creating a catalogue for women of resources for victims of violence. Through the establishment of grants to Zonta clubs around the world, which join with local organizations to provide mediation training for children, which fosters the development of violence-free relationships, Zonta International is promoting gender equality and violence reduction.

Another Zonta International project, a programme of UNICEF to eliminate maternal and neonatal tetanus in Nepal, addresses what is sometimes another form of discrimination — lack of access to adequate health-care services for women.

Zonta International, as a member of Project 5-0, a network of international women's organizations supporting a variety of projects which increase the economic and productive capacity of women, is addressing gender discrimination resulting from inequalities in economic structures and policies.

In this new millennium, Zonta International looks forward to working with the United Nations and its bodies and with other non-governmental organizations to achieve a world where inequality based on gender, class, caste and ethnicity is absent from every country and from relationships among countries.

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Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Thematic issues: gender and all forms of discrimination, in particular, racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

Statement submitted by Legiao da Boa Vontade (Legion of Good Will), a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2001/1.

01-24083 (E) 150201

The Legion of Good Will, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, brings to the attention of the Commission on Status of Women the serious discrimination lived especially by black women throughout the world.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms the principle of the inadmissibility of discrimination and proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, including distinction based on sex.

For centuries women have been facing the consequences of a patriarchal society, constantly having more duties than rights. In the particular case of black women, only an exotic value has been attributed to them, either as sexual objects or as slaves or easy-to-manipulate servants. Victims of poverty and lack of opportunity, most of them have continuously been exploited in many ways.

It must be a commitment of each and every one to work for changing this unbearable situation. We must, through social and spiritual re-education, guarantee the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, especially black women, who, according to the League's President, José de Paiva Netto, have as much dignity, talent and value as anyone else. They can rise to the highest positions because of their competence, without having to humiliate or prostitute themselves. Liberation will come from instruction, access to equal education and through the knowledge of their own spiritual values.

Thanks to the Charter of the United Nations and the work of the Organization, now at the beginning of a new millennium, we see the remarkable attention the international community is giving, as never before, to ending racial discrimination; Governments around the world have committed themselves to promote and encourage universal respect and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, without distinction of race, sex, language, religion or colour.

The Legion of Good Will, in a spirit of cooperation, calls to the attention of the Commission on the Status of Women the urgent need of an international campaign on discrimination against black women, emphasizing that racism is obscene and pollutes any country's atmosphere.

The League suggests that women such as Dr. Gertrudes Mongela, who was Secretary-General of the Women's Conference in Beijing (which the Legion of Good Will attended) should be empowered within the United Nations system to lead that change of mentality around the world, travelling, lecturing, promoting events and raising the flag of a new era, when nobody will be judged because of his or her skin colour or gender.

The Legion of Good Will, concerned with the equal rights of men and women, especially black women, facilitates emergency aid services in Latin America (Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia and Argentina) for women in poverty and provides access to food, health, maternal child health care, education, professional training, orientation and job placement. In this way, it has joined forces for the fulfilment of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Moreover, the Legion of Good Will's radio, television and press systems are constantly emphasizing the principles expressed in this statement.

The League offers to the United Nations its means of communications to promote the proposed campaign to millions of people around the world.

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Commission on the Status of Women
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Item 4 of the provisional agenda*
Thematic issues

Statement submitted by the International Federation of Settlements and Neighbourhood Centres, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2001/1.

01-24095 (E) 160201

The International Federation of Settlements and Neighbourhood Centres (IFS), a coalition of national, regional and local non-profit community-based social service organizations in 61 countries, recognizes that women are often disproportionately affected by poverty and social marginalization because they suffer from systemic and systematic discrimination. Women are at risk of experiencing multiple barriers in gaining access to economic and social rights such as employment, housing, land, food and social security. These barriers can arise from the disproportionate burden of reproductive and care-giving work performed by women; discriminatory traditional and cultural laws and practices; unequal representation by women in political and other decision-making structures at all levels; and the widespread violence perpetrated against women.

IFS understands the importance of identifying specific constraints affecting women in the enjoyment of economic and social rights, the need for data that are disaggregated by sex, and an examination of women's patterns of paid work, both the formal and informal sectors. National plans of action should incorporate those types of data collection. IFS believes that it is crucial for non-governmental organizations to be actively involved, along with Governments, in setting realistic targets, monitoring progress and contributing to the implementation of national plans.

IFS welcomes the recommendation of the Division for the Advancement of Women that non-governmental organizations and other organizations and actors of civil society should base their activities on human rights principles. Standards of international human rights instruments should be used by such organizations as a yardstick in all their work. In keeping with that goal IFS strongly supports the additional recommendation that human rights bodies within the United Nations system should encourage and facilitate greater involvement by non-governmental organizations in their work, including the adoption of innovative procedures to enhance such participation. One very good example of this type of inclusion occurred during recent sessions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, when non-governmental organizations were included in consultations.

IFS welcomes the adoption of optional protocols establishing communications procedures under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and looks forward to their application.

As an international non-governmental organization, IFS understands its responsibility for channelling information from national non-governmental organizations to international human rights bodies and, in turn, passing information from the international level to the national. IFS will facilitate the attendance of national non-governmental organizations at meetings of international human rights bodies.

IFS welcomes the encouragement of non-governmental organizations to submit to human rights treaty bodies "shadow" reports on economic and social rights. Wherever possible IFS will facilitate this type of submission from its members. IFS also welcomes the recommendation that international non-governmental organizations and their national partners should also target international bodies and processes with a significant economic and social rights and gender dimension.

Finally, IFS would be pleased to work in partnership with Governments, development agencies and other funding bodies to strengthen the work of NGOs in the realm of gender and economic and social rights issues.

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Thematic issues: gender and all forms of discrimination, in particular, racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

Statement submitted by the World Veterans Federation, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2001/1.

01-24365 (E) 200201

The World Veterans Federation (WVF) is pleased to bring to the attention of the Commission on the Status of Women the substance of several resolutions passed at its twenty-third General Assembly (3-10 December 2000) at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, France. This Assembly celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Federation, which also took place at UNESCO in Paris in 1950.

The World Veterans Federation (WVF) is an international non-governmental organization which brings together associations of those who have experienced the sufferings of war, fighting side by side or facing each other in combat, and who want to contribute to the establishment of a more peaceful, just and free world, based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. WVF has 166 member associations in 84 countries.

Recognizing that war and armed conflicts can affect men and women differently, in 1984 WVF created a Standing Committee on Women to focus on the situation of women in armed conflict. It provided considerable input to the drafting of the Beijing Platform for Action on relevant critical areas of concern and continues to be actively involved in the deliberations of United Nations bodies engaged in those areas.

WVF applauds the Commission on the Status of Women for focusing during its forty-fifth session on "Gender and all forms of discrimination, in particular racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance". Such focus is appropriate in view of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, to be held later this year in South Africa. At its twenty-third General Assembly, WVF offered full support for the forthcoming World Conference on Racism and recommended to all its member associations:

(a) To work together with other non-governmental organizations to sensitize public opinion to the urgent need to focus on practical measures to eradicate the scourges exposed in the theme of the conference;

(b) To urge their Governments to adopt attitudes propitious to the achievement of the main objectives of the Conference.

WVF fully supports the recommendation made by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination at its fifty-sixth session acknowledging that racial discrimination often does not affect women and men equally or in the same way and that there are circumstances in which racial discrimination only or primarily affects women. Therefore, when eradicating gender discrimination is being sought, it is crucial to pay attention to the racial factors that often penalize women as well.

Further, WVF supports the recommendation of the aide memoire for the Commission on the Status of Women expert group meeting on gender and racial discrimination (Zagreb, Croatia, November 2000), which urged that a gender perspective be integrated into the work and decisions of the World Conference on Racism. Women all over the world, including women in armed conflict, have a vital interest in the deliberations of the Conference.

Another area which needs a strong gender perspective is the administration of justice, both on a national level and internationally. WVF has for many years been an advocate for a permanent international criminal court, to provide justice for victims and to deny impunity to those who commit genocide, war crimes and crimes

against humanity. When the Rome Treaty was drawn up in 1998, creating such a Court, WVF urged its members to support it. At its recent General Assembly, WVF once again went on record supporting the Treaty and urging its ratification by States. WVF also called attention to the gender issues that are intrinsic to the Court's being an effective remedy for women. Below is the second part of the WVF resolution that addresses this issue.

International Criminal Court

... Observing that during multiple internal and international conflicts an ever increasing number of grave offences against international humanitarian law are perpetrated throughout the world, in total violation of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 to which certain States responsible for these crimes are parties and therefore it is urgent that the International Criminal Court put an end to the impunity of those responsible for the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression;

Urges the member associations to be strong advocates for gender justice so that gender-based crimes against women will be prosecuted with the same dedication as other crimes, and no exemptions would be allowed for religious or cultural reasons;

Urges member associations to appeal to their Governments to sign and ratify the Rome Statute as soon as possible, and without any reservation;

Further urges member associations to use their influence to dissuade their Governments from writing in any new provisions that would dilute the authority and jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, for gender-based crimes and for any other crimes perpetrated by military, political, or peacekeeping personnel.

One of the resolutions passed at the same WVF General Assembly addressed the situation of women in armed conflict.

Women in armed conflict

... 3. Observes that the Beijing + Five Conference meeting held in 2000 gave special emphasis to the issues surrounding women and armed conflict, especially calling attention to the steps taken by the United Nations to end impunity for the criminals who commit crimes against women during armed conflicts such as creation of the International Tribunals for Rwanda and Yugoslavia and the adoption of the Rome Statute for a permanent International Criminal Court;

4. Welcomes the Beijing + Five outcome document's reaffirmation of the need for a partnership between men and women to reach a common goal of gender equality;

5. Expresses satisfaction that the United Nations continues to give strong emphasis to the situation of women caught in armed conflicts, and urges it to continue to do so;

6. Calls upon member associations to press their respective Governments to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

7. Urges member associations to support and work with the Standing Committee on Women in its research and advocacy to call attention to and improve the status and well-being of women and children in armed conflicts.

WVF was one of the first international organizations to support the cause of the "comfort women", mostly Asian women who had been taken from their homes during World War II by the Japanese Army for sexual slavery purposes and whose lives were ruined by those experiences. With several court cases pending in Japan, WVF appealed again "to member associations to strongly urge their Governments to support the United Nations agencies' demands that the comfort women be compensated and be given an official apology for what happened during World War II ..."

Another resolution passed at the twenty-third General Assembly made a strong plea for women suffering the consequences of war.

Assistance to victims of violence

... 1. Noting that victims of violence, especially women, suffer from its consequences to a large extent and from discrimination also after the conflicts have ended in the individual States;

2. Recalling that public opinion does not pay the necessary attention to the needs of these women for appropriate assistance;

3. Considers it important that further assistance should be provided and offered to the groups of persons, including material and psycho-social help and comprehensive health care.

Other resolutions addressed the needs of women who are most of the civilian victims of war. One resolution argues for more assistance for returning refugees.

Assistance for returning refugees

... 1. Noting that many States have accepted refugees from States in conflict who now want to return into their native countries;

2. Recalling that the necessary protection and security must absolutely be re-established, i.e., by mine clearance;

3. Considers it important that the returning refugees receive the necessary protection as well as the help they need in order to be able to build up their lives in the destroyed areas;

4. Requests that the donor States coordinate their assistance in such a way that people with disabilities be given special attention and access to the services they require upon their repatriation.

Concern for the post-war status of women civilians who are victims of war was expressed in yet another resolution which urged that sufficient pensions for widows and dependants of war veterans and war disabled be provided, "considering that

pensions and allowances granted to widows and dependants of war veterans and war disabled are insufficient and do not enable them to meet their needs ...". The resolution further urges those Governments concerned to introduce legislative measures that would guarantee pensions and allowances and harmonize legal provisions in order to avoid inequalities.

Another subject on WVF's agenda is education for peace. This has been of special concern over the years to the WVF Standing Committee on Women. WVF paid tribute to this important UNESCO initiative in the following resolution quoted below.

Education for peace

... 1. Noting that UNESCO for several years has been steadfastly supporting a culture of peace initiative as an alternative to the culture of war that has dominated human history since it began, congratulates UNESCO and the United Nations for acknowledging the importance of this endeavour by designating the year 2000 as the "Year of the culture of peace";

2. Bearing in mind the commitment of associations of war veterans and victims of war in the fields of education for peace and in the initiation to a democratic and social way of life;

3. Considering that too many conflicts, internal tensions and national problems persisting in the world at the end of the twentieth century find as a pretext exacerbated nationalism, racism, ethnic or religious exclusions, makes its own UNESCO's concept that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed";

4. Invites member associations to inform and involve young people in one or more initiatives of UNESCO's Culture of Peace, to understand better the values of peace defended by the World War II generation with great sacrifices, and to motivate them to reject all racial, ethnic, religious and cultural hatreds, and inspire them to express solidarity with all oppressed peoples.

WVF policy positions are taken in the spirit of the WVF credo first articulated by Ralph Bunche: "None can speak more eloquently for peace than those who have fought in war."

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Statement submitted by the Baha'i International Community, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2001/1.

01-24653 (E) 280201

The Bahá'í International Community is pleased that the Commission on the Status of Women is focusing global attention on the impact of racism on women at its forty-fifth session. Bahá'ís the world over — regardless of gender or ethnicity — have longed for and promoted both the advancement of women and the elimination of all forms of prejudice, including those based on race, ethnicity, and gender.

While women are the ones primarily affected when race and gender inequalities coincide, the human race as a whole is disadvantaged and its progress retarded by these injustices. The Bahá'í writings state, "As long as women are prevented from attaining their highest possibilities, so long will men be unable to achieve the greatness which might be theirs."[1]

The disadvantages and injustices suffered by women of oppressed groups living in societies where resources are limited have been highlighted over the past two decades in international forums such as the United Nations. Yet the social structures that sustain discrimination and exploitation have proven remarkably difficult to dismantle, in part because the disadvantages experienced by women oppressed because of race produce unacknowledged benefits for women and men belonging to favoured groups. The reluctance to acknowledge these privileges perpetuates injustice and hinders society from developing in healthy ways.

Bahá'u'lláh has written, "The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established."[2] The Bahá'í community is dedicated in principle and practice to justice as the foundation for unity. It is, therefore, committed to the abolition of racism and to the promotion of the equality of women and men at all levels. Within the family, Bahá'ís seek to teach their children the values of oneness, equality and justice. Bahá'ís value interracial marriage for its positive effect on society and educate their daughters in the same curricula as their sons. If the family is not able to provide for the education of both, parents are encouraged to give preference to the girls, as they will be the first educators of the next generation.

Bahá'í administrative structures are designed to promote both the equality of women and men and the abolition of racial prejudice. Women are fully eligible to elect and to serve on local and national governing councils. In Bahá'í elections, if the vote results in a tie between two people, one of whom is a member of a minority group, that person is automatically considered as elected. In Bahá'í communities both women and men learn the art of "consultation", or the frank and courteous exchange of views. Social and economic development projects have established schools specifically for girls, training institutes for women, and village health care programmes in remote areas of the world that promote the well-being of women and children, thereby benefiting the whole society.

In international forums, the Bahá'í International Community has long encouraged a fundamental change in beliefs and attitudes about race through education and the promotion of the concept of world citizenship. It has also worked in those forums to advance the status of women. The road to justice is a long and thorny one because, ultimately, it demands a change of heart. Indeed, only when "the injury of one shall be considered the injury of all; the comfort of each, the comfort of all; the honour of one, the honour of all",[3] will the human race have faced the challenges inherent in social structures based on domination and refused to accept injustice as the natural order of things.

Notes

[1] 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks: Addresses Given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris in 1911-1912*, 10th ed. (London, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1979), p. 133.

[2] Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* (Wilmette, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 116.

[3] 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*, rev. ed. (Wilmette, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 168.

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Commission on the Status of Women

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6-16 March 2001

Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": review of mainstreaming in organizations of the United Nations system

Statement submitted by the International Alliance of Women, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; and the International Federation of Women in Legal Careers and the International Federation of Women Lawyers, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* * *

The above-named organizations, taking note of General Assembly resolution 50/166 on the role of the United Nations Development Fund for Women in eliminating violence against women, look forward to its reports on its activities to eliminate violence and to their providing information to the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights.

The above-named organizations also wish to bring to the attention of the Commission on the Status of Women the findings of the meeting of women in legal careers held in Toledo, Spain (6-9 September 2000). While acknowledging that violence is still employed against women worldwide, and being determined to work for its eradication, the above-named organizations have studied its causes and consequences in depth, including the effects upon women of armed conflict, culture, customs and practices, as well as the exercise of political power and the distribution of wealth which affect women negatively.

The Toledo Declaration calls upon all countries, in their efforts in eliminating violence against women, to:

1. Ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in order to prevent and sanction effectively crimes against humanity and particularly those against women and children;

2. Respect and implement the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and to recognize and declare

* E/CN.6/2001/1.

01-26398 (E) 060301

in a very explicit manner that torture and cruel or degrading treatment are crimes to which no proscription or amnesty may apply;

3. Establish national criminal courts in order to adjudicate violations of human rights and guarantee the prosecution of those guilty of the crimes of torture or cruel and degrading treatment. The courts must be able to receive reports of these crimes and their authors, prevent their impunity, and be able to remove from positions of power those judged guilty;

4. Include in their national legislation the possibility of granting asylum to women persecuted for reasons of gender, especially in cases of genital mutilation. It is essential that human rights prevail over cultural patterns and customs, and this should be so in all cases, especially during armed conflicts.

The above-mentioned organizations further recognize that the economic environment in which women live is often one of poverty preventing their attainment of personal autonomy, which increases their vulnerability to abuse and leads to exploitation in the labour markets. This increasing economic and social inequity prevents the development of women's and girls' human rights and generates new problems and social conflicts. It is necessary to make all possible efforts to prevent the destabilizing effects of the market economy which affect the decision-making capacity of many Governments. The design and evaluation of all social and economic policies of the States should integrate, at all times, a gender component and also allow women to participate in the decision-making that affects them. Further, procedures used in national accounting systems should be reformed so as to reflect truly the wealth produced by all, including the work of women, whether remunerated or not.

The democratic parity concept is the right of women to be represented in all decision-making, as in life, at 50 per cent. These democratic parity principles are based on non-discrimination rights, the right to political participation, and the duty of the public authorities to promote the conditions of, and remove the obstacles to, full citizenship in political, economic, social and cultural life. Additional studies and statistical analyses are needed to obtain information about the role of women in decision-making so that these data can insure the equal participation of women in every activity of civil society. Democratic parity requires: (a) respect for ideological diversity; (b) recognition of the women who have advanced feminist studies, including a theory of feminist politics; (c) recognition that the women's movement has opened debate, and the possibility of a variety of expressions and the solidarity of organized women, for the formulation of strategies leading to democratic parity; (d) recognition of such new movements as "Las Defensorias del Pueblo" in Latin America for the defence and promotion of women's human rights.

We believe in the absolute necessity of universal ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the opposition to all acts that are incompatible with its spirit, and the prompt ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by those States that have not done so.

The above-named organizations reaffirm their commitment of ongoing action, in the countries where they have representation, in the defence of women's rights and the stimulation of women's active participation in all sectors of society. The above-mentioned organizations encourage women's integration in decision-making organs and will see to it that the needed legislation is enacted to assure this active participation.

The above-named organizations acknowledge, like Paulo Freire, that they are prophets of the obvious. However, they also acknowledge that the message must be repeated over and over again, for it is difficult to hear.